

## Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4062

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

CINCLANT

USCINCEUR

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 1247

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI MOPS AO

SUBJ: SHORT TERM ASSESSMENT OF MILITARY SITUATION

1. AFTER FIGHTING IN THE EASTERN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN REGIONS OF ANGOLA, THE MPLA HAS WON FOR ITSELF A VERY STRONG POSITION AND THREATENS TO MAKE INOPERABLE JONAS SAVIMBI'S ANNOUNCED POLICY OF ESTABLISHING A ZONE OF INFLUENCE FOR UNITA. MPLA HAS THE KEY PORT OF LOBITO PLUS ALL TOWNS AND CITIES IN THE CENTRAL COASTAL REGION, AS WELL AS THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF HUILA, WHERE SA DA BANDEIRA PY LOCATED. MEANWHILE, MPLA HAS HELD ITS OWN AGAINST THE FNLA NORTH AND EAST OF LUANDA. AT THE MOMENT, MPLA LOOKS VERY STRONG, WHILE FNLA APPEARS TO LACK RESOLVE AND LEADERSHIP AND UNITA HAS THE IMAGE OF A WEAK ORGANIZATION NOT ANY OF A GREAT DEAL OF CONSIDERATION.

2. THE RADICALS IN THE MPLA WHO INSISTED UPON AN  
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ALL OUT FIGHT TO WIN AS MUCH OF ANGOLA AS POSSIBLE

HAVE BEEN VINDICATED IN THE SHORT RUN, BUT PROBLEMS ARE BRINGING TO APPEAR. MPLA IS STRETCHED THINLY ON SOME FRONTS AND MAY NOT AT THIS TIME HAVE THE RESERVES TO SEND TO CRITICAL AREAS SHOULD THE OTHER MOVEMENTS MAKE AN ALL-OUT THRUST. TROOPS AT CAXITO REMAIN WITHOUT RELIEF FOR SEVERAL DAYS AT A TIME AND OFTEN DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT FOOD AND WATER. STILL, MPLA IS FIGHTING TWO INEPT ORGANIZATIONS AND CAN COUNT ON FNLA AND UNITA MISTAKES OF COMMISSION AND OMISSION TO HELP SAVE THE DAY.

3. THREE OF MPLA'S GREATEST ADVANTAGES ARE THE LARGE NUMBER OF YOUNG URBAN BLACKS WHO HAVE JOINED THE ORGANIZATION THROUGHOUT ANGOLA, THE ENORMOUS (FOR ANGOLA) AMOUNTS OF ARMS SUPPLIED BY THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER COMMUNIST NATIONS AND THE QUALITY OF MPLA LEADERSHIP. DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING IN SA DA BANDEIRA, I HAVE BEEN TOLD, STUDENTS AND OTHER YOUNG BLACKS RECEIVED WEAPONS FROM MPLA STOCKPILES AND THEIR PRESENCE CONVINCED THE OUTNUMBERED FNLA AND UNITA FORCES TO AGREE TO A CEASEFIRE. UNITA ALREADY DISPUTES THAT THE CEASEFIRE IS VALID, BUT THE KEY POINT IS THE NUMBER OF ARMED PEOPLE MPLA WAS ABLE TO PRODUCE ON SHORT NOTICE. PARAMILITARY FORCES HAVE ALSO BEEN IMPORTANT IN OTHER AREAS. IN GABELA, FOR INSTANCE, THE MPLA HAS 1,000 STUDENTS IN A CENTER FOR REVOLUTIONARY INSTRUCTION (CIR). WHILE I HAVE NO ACCURATE REPORTS ON THE EXTENT THEY WERE USED IN THE FIGHTING, WE CAN BE ALMOST CERTAIN THEY WERE GIVEN ARMS AND SENT INTO BATTLE. ANOTHER CIR OF 1,600 STUDENTS IS LOCATED NEAR NOVA LISBOA.

4. ANOTHER AREA WHERE FIGHTING MAY ERUPT IS IN THE REGION BETWEEN LOBITO AND NOVA LISBOA. AGOSTINHO NETO TOLD ME SOME TIME AGO THAT MPLA WAS STRONG ON THE AREA AND RESIDENTS DOWN THAT WAY HAVE CONFIRMED THAT MPLA HAS BEEN SENDING ARMS IN. EARLIER, UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF MPLA ARMS SHIPMENTS TO SOUTHERN ANGOLA ARE NOW BORNE OUT BY THE RESULTS OF THE FIGHTING. MPLA IS SWEEPING AHEAD ON MOMENTUM AND DOES NOT WANT TO STOP NOW. ARMS AND AMMUNITION APPARENTLY ARE STILL NO PROBLEM AND MORE

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CONTINUE TO ARRIVE AT POINTE NOIRE. ALMOST ALL MPLA TROOPS AND IRREGULARS HAVE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND THERE IS NO STINTING ON THE USE OF AMMUNITION BY RECRUITS IN TRAINING.

5. THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN THE THREE LIBERATION GROUPS IS WORTH CONSIDERING AT THIS POINT. THE PORTUGUESE SOME MONTHS AGO DEMOBILIZED ALL BLACK ANGOLANS. THE FORMER BLACK TROOPS ARE JOINING THE LIBERATION

ARMIES ACCORDING TO THE AREAS FROM WHICH THEY COME. THE KIMBUNDUS FROM LUANDA AND NEARBY REGIONS HAD THE BEST EDUCATIONS AND AS A RESULT ROSE WHILE IN THE ARMY TO BE OFFICERS AND NONCOMS. A NUMBER OF THESE FORMER CADRE, INCLUDING A FEW COMMANDO OFFICERS, ARE NOW IN THE MPLA. THE OVIMBUNDU, ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, DID NOT DO WELL IN THE ARMY AND THE PRESENT UNITA CADRE IS VERY POOR. AS A RESULT THE UNITA RECRUITS ARE RECEIVING MEDIOCRE TRAINING. THE BAKONGO ALSO HAD FEW SKILLS AND DID NOT BRING FNLA ANY REAL LEADERSHIP TALENT.

6. MPLA HAS SEVERAL TRAINING BASES INSIDE ANGOLA, IN ADDITION TO THE BASE IN CONGO BRAZZAVILLE WITH A CAPACITY OF 3,500 RECRUITS. MPLA ALSO HAS A SECRET COMMANDO BASE NEAR LUANDA WHERE INTENSIVE TRAINING IS GIVEN PROMISING RECRUIT. ACCORDING TO ONE OBSERVER THE INSTRUCTORS THERE ARE ALL BLACK OR MESTIZO ANGOLANS. IN THE FIELD, THE MPLA COMMANDERS SHOW UP IN A MUCH BETTER LIGHT THAN THOSE OF THE OTHER TWO GROUPS. MPLA IS REPORTED TO HAVE SENT VERY GOOD COMMANDERS TO LOBITO AND LARGE NUMBERS OF TROOPS TO ENSURE A VICTORY IN THAT KEY CITY. IN SHORT, MPLA SEEMS TO HAVE BETTER CADRE THAN THE OTHERS, MONEY, SOME ORGANIZATIONAL SENSE, UNDERSTANDS THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC GOALS, IS AGGRESSIVE, HAS WEAPONS AND A LARGE POOL OF MANPOWER IN THE URBAN BLACKS ON WHICH IT HAS ALREADY DRAWN.

7. THE FNLA IS IN CONTROL OF NORTHERN ANGOLA AND IN THE WAKE OF THE DEPARTURE OF MANY PORTUGUESE CIVIL SERVANTS HAS HAD TO TAKE OVER MUCH OF THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. CUT OFF AS IT IS FROM LUANDA AND THE

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SOUTH, FNLA MUST DEPEND UPON ZAIRE FOR FOOD AND SUPPLIES. ZAIRE'S OWN PROBLEMS AND DISORGANIZATION GUARANTEE THAT FNLA WILL REMAIN IN A WEAK POSITION AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. OVER TIME THEY COULD BUILD ENOUGH OF A LOGISTICAL BASE TO PERMIT A SUSTAINED OFFENSIVE, BUT FNLA INCOMPETENCE AND CONCERN OF TOP OFFICIALS WITH

PETTY PERSONAL AFFAIRS, AMONG OTHER DEFICIENCIES, CONSPIRE TO GIVE MPLA A DISTINCT EDGE IN ORGANIZATIONAL AND FIGHTING ABILITY. ONLY IN THE NORTH CAN FNLA COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF CIVILIANS AND I FOUND THAT LITTLE ATTEMPT HAD BEEN MADE TO ORGANIZE THE POPULACE, AS MPLA HAS DONE IN LUANDA, THE EAST AND THE CENTRAL COAST.

8. UNITA IS IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. IT HAS FEW ARMS AND ALTHOUGH NOT READY TO FIGHT, HAS BEEN FORCED TO DO SO. SAVIMBI HAD LOST A GREAT DEAL OF PRESTIGE AND RESPECT BY NOT RESPONDING TO MPLA AGGRESSION. HIS STYLE IS NOT ONE OF CONFRONTATION, BUT HIS OWN PARTY HAS FORCED HIM TO TAKE A STAND. STILL, HE HAS NOT FORMALLY SIDED WITH THE FNLA BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT TO CLOSE THE DOOR TO POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MPLA. THE UNITA GENERAL ASSEMBLY NOW IN PROGRESS PROMISES TO BE A STORMY AFFAIR, AS THE PARTY IS NOW FACING THE MORE CRUCIAL PERIOD IN ITS EXISTENCE. FNLA IS NOT OF MUCH HELP IN THE SOUTH AS IT HAS NO ABILITY TO RESUPPLY. UNITA CANNOT COPE WITH SUPERIOR MPLA ARMS AND LEADERSHIP. AT THE MOMENT, IT LOOKS AS THOURHHMILA'S STRATEGY IS TO ATTACK, HOLDING OUT THE PROMISE OF NEGOTIATION.

9. THE PORTUGUESE ARE IN AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION; THEY HAVE REDUCED THEIR TROOPS STRENGTH TO ABOUT 22,000 AND HAVE NO CAPABILITY OF CONTROLLING EVENTS OUTSIDE THE MAJOR CITIES, AND PERHAPS CAN DO SO ONLY IN LUANDA. THEIR STRATEGY IS TO PULL BACK GRADUALLY FROM THE INTERIOR TO THE COASTAL CITIES OF LUANDA AND LOBITO AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, MOCAMEDES, IN ORDER BE ABLE TOGET OUT COMPLETELY BY INDEPENDENCE NOVEMBER 11. DEMORALIZED AND SPLIT  
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AS THEY ARE BY IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, ANXIOUS TO GO HOME AND CONTEMPTUOUS OF THEIR OFFICERS, ONLY A FEW UNITS HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO STAND AND XPRHTJN THE PORTUGUESE HAVE ALREADY REDUCED THEIR MEN AND MATERIAL TO A NEW LOW LEVEL, AND IN LIGHT OF THE DEVELOPING CRISIS IN THE METROPOLIS, THEY CANNOT AND WILL NOT TAKE THE DIFFICULT POLITICAL DECISION TO TRY AND CONTROL EVENTS WITH THEIR MILITARY FORCES IN ANGOLA.

10. THE NEW PORTUGUESE POLICY FOR ANGOLA SEEMS TO BE LITTLE MORE THAN A MEASURE DESIGNED TO KEEP VIOLENCE TO A MINIMUM SO THAT THEY CAN LEAVE IN NOVEMBER WITH A CLEAN CONSCIENCE. THE THREE PART POLICY OF PROMOTING DIALOGUE AMONG THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, TAKING OVER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND INDUCING THE MPLA MILITARY TO LEAVE LUANDA HAS NO CHANCE OF SUCCESS AS LONG AS THE MPLA RADICALS BELIEVE THEY HAVE THE ABILITY TO IMPOSE THEIR WILL OVER MUCH OF THE COUNTRY. ONLY IF FNLA AND UNITA QUICKLY SHOW SOME MUSCLE WILL MPLA ACCEDE TO A SETTLEMENT ON TERMS OTHER THAN ITS OWN.  
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